

# OREs Just Tools of the Trade

By SFC Lawrence Kordosky

**L**ook at inspections and evaluations as "tools of the trade," and not as the monsters many leaders make them to be.

Operational Readiness Evaluations (OREs) were conducted during Operation Desert Storm to solve training shortfalls of Reserve forces. These evaluations continue today in an effort to keep our Army trained and ready.

An ORE measures the readiness of Active and Reserve Component units against the Army standard. A unit's Mission Essential Task List (METL), with selected collective tasks from the Mission Training Plan (MTP), is the basis for all training evaluations.

FORSCOM Regulation 220-2 gives guidance for the ORE and states: "The primary focus of the ORE will be on a unit's current collective training status and ability to mobilize and deploy."

I've been an ORE evaluator for the past 18 months and in this article I focus on nine areas that I hope will help NCOs become better leaders and war fighters and increase soldier survivability on the battlefield.

**Make sure your soldiers are ready for mobilization/deployment [the compliance phase].**

The compliance phase of the ORE checks the unit's ability to maintain the proper paperwork, records, and equipment so the unit can mobilize and deploy administratively. Some basic soldier care deficiencies found during this phase are: lack of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) tests and required immunizations; panoramic X-rays, both in their files and confirmed on file at the Central Processing Storage Facility. Without these, a soldier can't deploy.

Another critical area that delays or prevents soldiers from deploying is failing to prepare family care plans. AR 600-20 identifies

those soldiers who must have a family care plan. Your soldiers should review DD Form 93 (Emergency Data Card) and Personal Mobilization Packets to identify single parents and soldiers with military spouses.

Married Reserve Component soldiers must have a copy of their rental/lease agreement or mortgage in their packets to initiate Variable Housing Allowance (VHA) upon mobilization.

Soldiers and their families must be able to take care of themselves during mobilization/deployment. A unit family support group and awareness of what that group can do for soldiers and family members is essential.

Soldiers must have the proper equipment to train with and deploy to the battlefield. Leaders should issue their MTOE equipment to the company then hand receipt it to the platoon. Mission items may be borrowed from another unit. Make sure your soldiers' MOPP gear fits properly. Sensitive items, absolutely critical for accomplishing the mis-

sion, must be inventoried.

Make sure you have the necessary transportation and devices to get all equipment from your unit to the mobilization station.

Parent units are responsible for developing the plans which get joining units to the mobilization station. Higher headquarters should stop requiring units to maintain unnecessary paperwork which limits training opportunities. Just maintain the files necessary to mobilize and join the parent units. Guidance on who is required to maintain complete mobilization files is specifically outlined in FORSCOM Regulation 500-3-3. Additionally, mobilization stations should not cancel mobilization visits for new commanders.

**Know your leadership strengths and weaknesses.**

Soldiers won't follow leaders when they don't trust their technical or tactical proficiency. Building leader confidence is important. A leader's technical and



*Evaluated units seemed plagued with poor map reading skills. When concentrating on map reading, put extra emphasis on terrain association, on foot as well as from a vehicle.*

Photo courtesy 4th Inf Div, Ft. Carson, CO



tactical competence as well as decisiveness can't be accomplished at drill alone. Leaders study the art of war at home.

Successful leaders motivate themselves and their soldiers to accomplish the mission. Leaders don't accept substandard performance.

Setting the example for today's NCO encompasses so much more than just reading manuals and reciting standards. Today's soldiers are smarter than they've ever been and can see right through leaders who don't practice what they preach. During OREs, the evaluation team repeatedly sees soldiers with chin straps under their chin, behind their head or completely unfastened. GEN George S. Patton once said if you can't get a soldier to keep his chin strap fastened, it's pretty difficult to get him to die for his country.

Maintain appearance and personal hygiene standards.

All NCOs need to be empowered by the chain of command to make decisions and take the initiative. This is most evident at the platoon sergeant and first sergeant levels. It appears that senior NCOs are so scared they're going to make a mistake, they're afraid to act at all. Believe me, if you don't know what you're doing or if you do nothing at all, it's going to come out during the After Action Review.

Take responsibility for your actions and learn from your mistakes.

Plan actions so soldiers' time isn't wasted. When soldiers "hurry up and wait," they relax and become vulnerable to enemy attack.

### **Know your individual skills.**

Know the individual skills and responsibilities that come with your rank. Your soldiers should be prepared to take the Common Task and Army Physical Fitness tests. Every NCO should be physically fit, enforce the standards and strive to go beyond the 60-point minimum. Verify the proper way to do each event then enforce those standards ruthlessly.

When analyzing tactical operations, don't just read the words, look beyond the words. A good example is that most OPODs will say consolidate and reorganize. When you see this, think about how you're going to accomplish this, then brief your soldiers.

Platoon sergeants should be so well-

versed in tactics that they can fill the platoon leader's shoes at a moment's notice.

Units we evaluated also seem plagued by poor map reading skills. It definitely sets a sour tone for a field exercise if you can't get to where you want to go.

Communication is a perishable skill. Every NCO needs to be trained to use the Signal Operating Instructions to send a message or call for fire and then get periodic refresher training. Senior NCOs need to use proper radio procedures and set the example for their junior leaders.

### **Know the standard.**

We have an obligation to bring our soldiers home alive. The only way to do this is to train, Train, TRAIN and the only way to train is to TRAIN TO STANDARD!

Too often, we accept word of mouth as the standard. If you don't know the standard, you can't train to it. Almost every unit in the Army has a Mission Training Plan, the standard the Army has given us to train by. If you don't have one, then your unit should draft one based on your mission.

The MTP contains the Training and Evaluation Outlines. Train on those which fit your mission and your METL. MTPs are generic. Change the T&EOs so they apply to your unit's mission. Make those changes as soon as possible to establish the standard for your subordinates. Plan for and train in different conditions (day, night, NBC). Your soldiers aren't truly proficient at the task until they can perform the entire task in all three conditions. Also, read the Tactical Standard Operating Procedures and apply local guidance. Always use the Army standard as your base, then build on it.

### **Improve your tactical and leadership skills.**

A working understanding of FM 25-101, **Battle Focused Training** is needed to fully understand how to train your soldiers. The NCO Professional Development program is an outstanding ve-

hicle to continue training junior leaders. Remember, NCOPD is supposed to be battle-focused and METL-driven, not given over to administrative subjects. Sergeants major should not neglect specific training for their first sergeants. The NCOPD for the first sergeant and his platoon sergeants should be specifically geared to unit tactical deployment missions. The first sergeant and senior

### **Successful Warfighters...**

- ◆ *Reduce all collective training to a crew drill.*
- ◆ *Always conduct a PCI according to your checklist.*
- ◆ *Always conduct a rehearsal before operations.*
- ◆ *Always do constructive AARs. Let the soldiers tell you what's right, what's wrong and how they're going to improve.*
- ◆ *Go to the field once during a quarter, at a minimum. At least one field trip during the year should improve survivability skills.*

NCOs of a unit should develop the NCOPD based on the unit's METL weaknesses. Develop NCOPD subjects at company level, get their approval at battalion level.

Don't let NCOs put off applying for the Noncommissioned Officer Education System (NCOES). Initiate a working Order of Merit List. Motivate all soldiers, but send only the most qualified.

All NCOs need to improve their tactical planning skills. Leaders need to put emphasis on using the 1/3 - 2/3 rule in the planning sequence. This means leaders need to initially determine the available planning time then allow one-third of their available time to mission planning and two-thirds for execution. Leaders need to disseminate information as quickly as possible by using warning orders. Our number-one peacetime enemy is seldom having enough time to do everything we have to do. If we're going to do it once, we might as well do it right.

### **Know your unit's mission, its capabilities to accomplish the mission, and your soldiers' capabilities.**

In order to know the company's capabilities leaders must know their soldiers' capabilities. They must know their strengths and weaknesses in physical fitness, MOS knowledge, survivability knowledge, motivation and ability to lead. Pocket-sized leader books help to



monitor CTT, weapons qualification, crew drill results, and APFT results. When updating leader books, don't forget to brief the platoon leader so he can make sure the company's data is also current.

NCOs should break down the battalion TACSOP to the company level. The company then has a tactical plan to train on and there will be a tactical/security plan when the unit gets to the field. Platoon sergeants need a plan to survive at the platoon and company levels. Think about how your platoon fits into it and develop specific complementary plans.

### **Know how to use and maintain your equipment.**

You must start now—and I mean today—taking a vested interest in maintaining your equipment for your unit to be successful on the battlefield. Leaders must ensure preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCSs) are done properly and aren't limited to vehicles, masks and weapons.

While supervision of operator PMCS is the key to keeping equipment operational, it's deficient in almost all of the units I've seen.

Soldiers are constantly reminded to do their maintenance on the equipment to the standard outlined in the appropriate operator-level technical manual. NCOs must train their soldiers properly, give periodic refresher training and certify them to operate their equipment by using proper equipment licensing procedures. Every trailer operator must know the proper hook-up and inspection procedures before movement. Make sure periodic hands-on maintenance is being done, not just the paperwork. All calibrations in the company must be staggered so that all "like items" are not Non-Mission Capable at the same time.

Equipment seems to break just when it's needed. This is especially true with communications equipment. One minute a communications check with the platoon leader is successful and the next minute you can't reach anybody. Most of the time, good operator PMCS will prevent this from happening.

### **Know how to survive and keep your soldiers alive.**

Apply appropriate survivability skills to all training. Battle and survival skills

are key to a successful field training exercise.

Develop a Pre-Combat Inspection and a pre-execution checklist to make certain your soldiers have everything they need for battle.

Tailor the checklist to the platoon and assign soldiers specific tasks. Create a checks-and-balances system to ensure all equipment is there, shortages are identified and reported to the company.

Break down the checklist to encompass a full company move, a platoon move from a tactical site and preparation for tactical operations. Use the checklist and continually update it.

One critical task that would prevent a lot of casualties is the proper operation and emplacement of the M-8 chemical alarm.

Take all your alarms when you go to the field. Remember to place the alarm upwind, camouflage it and periodically check its operation. Bring the M-8 alarm when going into an unsecured area—it may save your life. Request fresh batteries for all equipment prior to any field exercise.

### **And don't ever forget...**

Even though the T&EOs are agreed upon before the evaluation, some things are frequently forgotten, such as:

- ◆ Listening positions/observation posts

- ◆ Knowing what security patrols and reactionary forces are; train them, and use them to secure the field site

- ◆ Continuing to improve the perimeter; request external support (engineers, artillery, MPs, etc.)

- ◆ Processing Enemy Prisoners of War. Someone other than the first sergeant and commanding officer should know how to process EPWs and captured documents

- ◆ Incorporating passive air defense into all phases of operations

- ◆ Using strip maps during all tactical moves

- ◆ Speaking up if you see something being done wrong

- ◆ Having a field sanitation plan

- ◆ Knowing what an air defense alarm is

- ◆ Doing a thorough Primary Marksmanship Instruction before zero firing

- ◆ Maintaining physical security of

your equipment

- ◆ Thinking NBC (the silent killer) in everything you do

- ◆ Camouflaging the water buffalo properly

- ◆ Learning how to use your crew-served weapons

During one ORE, I saw a soldier trying to load his M-60 machine gun. He was obviously having difficulty in getting the gun operational. I asked him what was wrong and he said he couldn't load his weapon. I asked him why not and he replied, "My squad leader never trained me."

NCOs should be held directly responsible for basic soldier care. Compliance phase problems are the easy thing to fix. The hard thing to fix is the training and sustainability of your soldiers, which ultimately keeps them alive. The comment most often heard when conducting an evaluation is:

*"You just don't understand that in the Reserve/Active component we do things differently. You just don't understand how we do business."*

What these units don't understand is that the ORE evaluation teams are comprised of officers, warrant officers and senior NCOs from every component who are experts in their fields. We may not always understand how you do business, but we do know how business should to be conducted according to the Army standard.

Every unit is different and we conduct every evaluation a little differently. But, the goal remains the same. OREs are given to both Reserve and Active Component units and the standard never changes, regardless of the unit.

I'd like nothing better than to have a unit be successful during an ORE. Don't think of it as a pass/fail evaluation. Think of it as a learning process that will help focus your training.

We'll tell you exactly what we see—with no political agenda. Take what you learn and use it to develop and plan the next year's training. ■

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